

THE ASYLUM

Quarterly Journal of the
Numismatic Bibliomania Society

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*When we are
collecting books,
we are collecting
happiness.*

Vincent Starrett
1886–1974



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The Asylum

Vol. 32, No. 3

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Front cover: Main entrance of the Ashmolean Museum of Art and Archaeology in Oxford (<https://www.flickr.com/photos/dichohecho/2518680087>; available under a Creative Commons Attribution license [CC-BY 2.0]).



From the Editor-in-Chief: Hello from the Windy City!

It was great to see so many of you at the recent ANA World's Fair of Money, which took place in early August in Chicago. As some of you may already know, I am now calling Chicago home once again, as I made a move over the summer from New York for a number of reasons, though largely driven by a desire to be closer to family. I am still dedicated to my positions of Vice President of the NBS and Editor-in-Chief of *The Asylum* and wanted to provide a short update to my new roles. I have been settling back into Chicago, and have recently started a new position as the Exhibition and Collection Manager of Ancient and Byzantine Art at the Art Institute of Chicago. I'm proud to be employed again in a museum institution, one which has a wide range of objects including a substantial number of coins, several of which are currently on display in the permanent collection galleries.

The Art Institute became an essential part of Chicago's permanent architectural landscape in 1879 during a period of rebuilding that followed the famous 1871 fire that destroyed so much of the city. It found a permanent home in 1893 when it moved into a building that had been constructed for the World's Columbian Exposition, which took place in Chicago in that year. Major expansion occurred less than a decade later with the opening of the Ryerson Library in 1901. The other major expansion took place more recently with the opening of the new Modern Wing in 2009.

At the original (and still primary) entrance to the museum, opening onto Michigan Avenue, there stand two bronze lions that flank the grand staircase. For bibliophiles, they may immediately bring to mind two other famous lions (of marble) situated in a similar guardian manner on the steps of the New York Public Library off Fifth Avenue (named Patience and Fortitude). The Art Institute's lions were created for the opening of the museum in 1893 and were a gift of Mrs. Henry Field. Their sculptor, Edward Kemeys, gave them unofficial names that are



attributed to their poses. As the museum website tells us, “the south lion stands ‘In an Attitude of Defiance,’ while the north lion is ‘On the Prowl.’”

As next year’s ANA World’s Fair of Money will be at the same site once again, I look forward to the opportunity to catch up with everyone in person. In the meantime, we continue to have a steady line-up of exciting articles featured for the upcoming issues of *The Asylum*, and I look forward to staying in touch with you all and welcome your ideas for future articles.

—Elizabeth Hahn Bengé

C. H. V. Sutherland: A Celebration

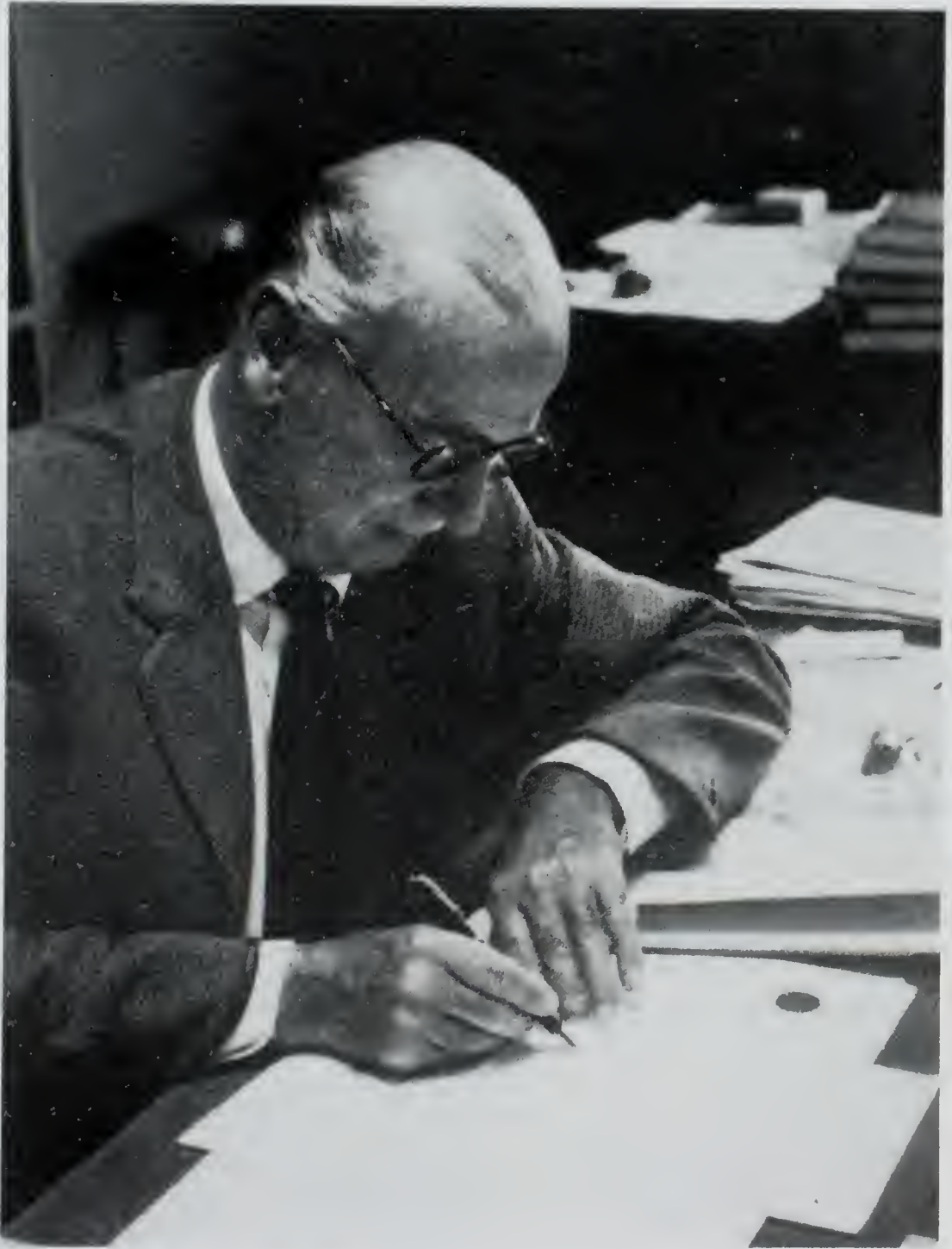
Jeff Reichenberger

Many years ago, I was fortunate to obtain the book *Art in Coinage: The Aesthetics of Money from Greece to the Present Day*, by C. H. V. Sutherland, published in 1956 by Philosophical Library, Inc. I am interested in the always-evolving subject of coin design, therefore I was drawn to the title. The only other book that touched on the subject of coinage design that I was aware of was *Numismatic Art in America* by Cornelius Vermeule, who as the title implies, focused on United States issues. Sutherland's scope is wide, covering world coinage beginning in 700 BC with Greece and continuing through the middle of the twentieth century.

The idea of this article is not to "review" or "critique" the book. Nor do I aspire, under-qualified as I am, to analyze the author's expert analysis. My aim is to celebrate with all of you the beauty of the written word. As complex, personal, and even rancorous as the subject of coin design can often be, the eloquence of Sutherland's writing make the reader's journey through the topic smooth and delightful. He admits the difficulty of such an undertaking in the Preface, and concludes that aesthetic design is always a deeply personal venture for the beholder:

Any attempt to trace the fine history of art and design in the coinage of the Western world must be beset by difficulties. Coins have been produced in massive quantities ever since early Greek days. Many have been of exquisite quality; many more, indifferent or bad. Amid so great a flood of material, comparison is not easy. Often it is a matter of taste. . . . Therefore, in singling out what appear to me to be admirable examples of coin design, I have followed the only possible guide – the sense of spontaneous pleasure and the reasoned satisfaction which they have given me.

Sutherland is best known by numismatists who specialize in ancient coinage, as an author, co-author, contributor, and editor of *Roman Imperial Coinage*, the ten-volume catalogue of chronologically listed and



Humphrey Sutherland, Keeper of the Heberden Coin Room, in his office at the Ashmolean Museum in Oxford, England. Reprinted here courtesy of the Ashmolean Museum of Art and Archeology.

attributed coins of the Roman emperors from 31 BC to AD 491, which is the standard reference on the subject. However, his numismatic accolades reach much farther.

Carol Humphrey Vivian Sutherland, known as Humphrey, was born on May 5, 1908, in Surrey, England. He was educated at preparatory school in Surrey and at Westminster School in London, where he was a King's Scholar. He advanced on scholarship to Christ Church, Oxford—a constituent college of the University of Oxford. At age 24 he was invited to work as an assistant in the newly founded coin room of the Ashmolean Museum of Art and Archaeology. (The Ashmolean is the world's first university museum, dating to 1677 when a "cabinet of curiosities" was donated to the university by Elias Ashmole.) Thus began Sutherland's lifetime work in numismatics.

He developed expertise in Roman coinage and won the Barclay Head prize for ancient numismatics in 1934. He published the monographs *Romano-British Imitations of Bronze Coins of Claudius I* in 1935 and *Coinage and Currency in Roman Britain* in 1937. During World War II he served with the Fire Service while continuing his work at Ashmolean. In 1944, through auction, he secured for the Ashmolean a large cache of early Anglo-Saxon gold coins known as the Crondall hoard. This became the basis for his 1948 publication *Anglo-Saxon Gold Coinage in the Light of the Crondall Hoard*, which is still a primary reference on the topic.

Sutherland continued to lecture at the university after the war and was elevated to full-time Assistant Keeper of the coin room. The *Oxford Dictionary of National Biography* explains his influence: "Despite the minutely detailed and exacting standards of his scholarship he never allowed numismatics to seem dull. He taught with great influence, as many of his students went on to museum and university posts with a greatly enhanced understanding of the importance of coins for the study of history."

In 1957 he was appointed Keeper of the Coin Room. As an adjunct to the Department of Antiquities the coin room had been, in earlier years, staffed only by the Keeper and himself. But by 1957, largely through his dedication, "the coin room had achieved the status of an independent department in its own right, and when he retired, in 1975, the establishment consisted of five full-time academics, a part-time assistant, and two secretaries. The original coin room had expanded through the addition of a library, a teaching room, and a suite of offices."

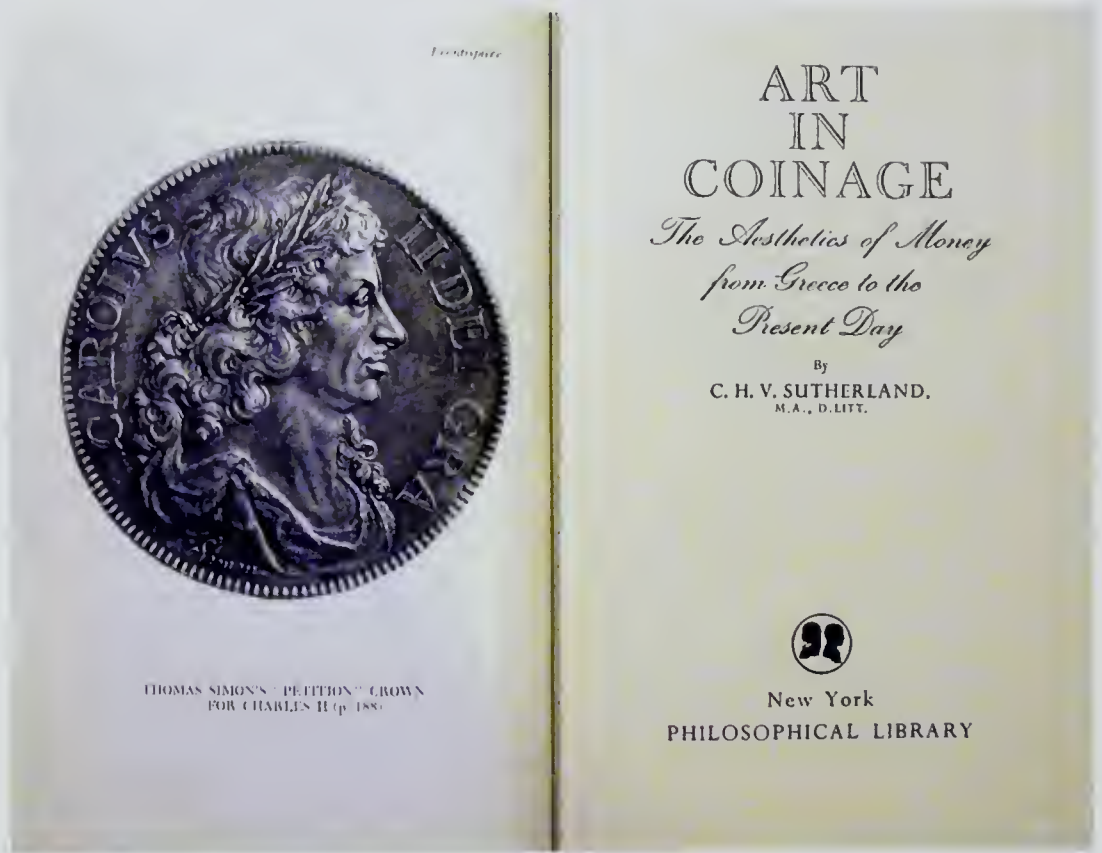


Medal struck for C. H. V. Sutherland by the Royal Numismatic Society, 1951. Sutherland was president of the Royal Numismatic Society from 1948 to 1953. Bronze, 51.2 mm. By Paul Vincze.

If Sutherland's greatest work was the creation of a thriving department which continues to flourish long after his departure, his scholarly publications also constitute an enduring legacy: "In addition to hundreds of articles and reviews he published a number of longer works, including two volumes of the important Roman Imperial Coinage series: volume 1, 31 BC–AD 69 (1986), and volume 6, From Diocletian's Reform (AD 294) to the Death of Maximinus (AD 313) (1967). He also helped to edit this series and the *Numismatic Chronicle* as well as serving as president of the Royal Numismatic Society (1948–1953), of the International Numismatic Commission (1960–73), and as *consiglio* of the Centro Internazionale di Studi Numismatici in Naples (1966–73). He was honoured by all the leading European and American numismatic societies and in 1970 was created a CBE (award class of the British Empire) and elected a fellow of the British Academy."

Sutherland was married in 1933 to Monica Porter, who was a widow with three young children. They raised the family in Cumnor village just west of Oxford, where Humphrey and Monica remained their entire lives. Classical music and gardening were particular pleasures outside of numismatics. He passed away at his home on May 14, 1986, working on proofs of his *Roman History and Coinage, 44 BC–AD 69* which was published in 1987.

Though he was obviously busy in the early/mid-fifties, we can be thankful he took time to write *Art in Coinage*, which I believe to be timeless in its assessment of design and processes to create design and coinage. But I should not have you take my word for it. Readers must



Frontispiece and title page of *Art in Coinage*.

appreciate it for themselves. Of course, I recommend finding a copy of the book through a numismatic library or bookseller, but to whet your appetite, with permission from the publisher, I have reproduced the four-page Introduction verbatim for your reading pleasure, and will engage you in a brief discussion afterward. Enjoy.

Art in Coinage, Chapter I, Introduction, by C. H. V. Sutherland

Coins, considered as an art, possess a strong and indeed growing claim upon the keen eyes and the sympathetic interest of those who love what is beautiful. Viewed simply as a sequence of artistic creation, beginning in the seventh century before Christ, the coinage of the western world presents a fine and consistent continuity, combined with a perfection in survival, which perhaps no other art-form could surpass. Judged from a narrower, if more exacting, standpoint of purely technical achievement the record is scarcely less impressive – especially if medals are admitted (as they should be) into the company of coins, to which they are first cousins. At nearly all times coins have shown

directness of appeal, essential humanity, and a quality which, falling happily short of sophistication, rises far above the merely simple. For the art expressed in coinage is a preeminently social art. The first purpose of coins is to serve as a social commodity – the hard cash designed for the practical everyday business of hand-to-hand exchange. According, therefore, as they have been issued at a time when religion, commerce, wars and politics have been uppermost in national consciousness they have at most periods reflected the spirit of their time with a bright and curiously spontaneous fidelity.

This would not mean, of course, that art as expressed in coinage need have become at any time a great art. And it is perfectly true that at certain periods its standard has fallen to an undistinguished or frankly dull level: technical skill, for one reason or another, can quickly decay and – far more dangerous – political pressure or the frozen hand of convention can cramp experiment and kill inventiveness. It remains an undoubted fact, however, witnessed by many periods of brilliant conception and execution, that the general record over twenty-five centuries has been a noble one. Moreover, in one respect especially the study of coinage is unusually kind. For the coins – and the medals – of most ages exist in comparative abundance. Anyone who wishes to follow their long history, to study their flexible development, to enjoy their subtle combination of complexity and simplicity, can do so with ease.

If, in spite of this, the art-history of coinage has been to some extent neglected in the past while that of painting or sculpture or architecture has thrived, a reason is possibly to be found in the very small scale of the coins themselves. “The art of the miniaturist” is a phrase often heard in connection with the visual arts. Generally the expression has a faintly disparaging flavor, seeming to imply that a small work of art, however elaborate, however skilfully wrought, is somehow less remarkable, less praiseworthy, and even less difficult or exacting than a large one. Such a view must surely be misleading and false. The scale of a work of art, indeed, must be a most important element in the final balance of its total quality. But scale is not good or bad, pleasant or unpleasant, in itself absolutely: it is good or bad as applied to a particular object created for a particular purpose. We criticize a building which seems obviously too small or too large for its setting – and the rebuilding of the City of London round St. Paul’s Cathedral is a sharp reminder of this question of setting, from

which New York, with its dominant vertical emphasis pointing to the limitless sky, is mainly free. A public statue which menaces its environs or is lost in them: a vase or a jug so large that it cannot conveniently be used for its natural and intended purpose: a painting which however fine, cannot be so hung that its fineness is appreciated – it is not difficult to think of examples of miscalculated scale. Indeed, scale is as often a matter of practical convenience as of any purely aesthetic canons.

Reasons of practical convenience have brought it about that, for twenty-five centuries, coins (as distinct from medals and special pieces) have not normally exceeded a diameter of $1\frac{3}{4}$ inches: the majority lie well below that size. The designs which have been elaborated in each succeeding age to fill that tiny field deserve as much praise or blame, in their own right, as larger works of art. For the artistry which goes to the designing of a fine coin is beset by difficulties. First, there is the matter of spatial setting. A good architect should know the spatial setting most likely to provide him with the correct and most successful limitations to his work. Thus the Radcliffe Camera at Oxford rears its beautiful dome in the midst of a closely confining quadrangle formed by buildings of the most varied form, height and style, to none of which it does violence. The good sculptor is equally well aware of the extent to which the element of space will set off what he creates. Even such very small objects as miniatures proper or little jeweled toys like the works of Faberge' enjoy a stability in space by being specially displayed in some deliberately advantageous way – on a wall or bracket or elegant little table. But for a coin there is no such stability in space. Coins are never still for long at a time. Their primary purpose is to serve social and economic necessity; and to do this they must move – as they have always moved – steadily through space and time, not being displayed as *objets d'art* at all. They are absolute in themselves: their only spatial element lies in their own internal ratio between that part of the surface which is covered by design and that part which is left free. Their art-form is as self-contained as any in the world.

In addition to this essential aesthetic problem there is, secondly, a group of technical difficulties. Coins are produced (or, to use the proper term, “struck”) by the pressure of two engraved dies upon a metal blank which lies between them. Today, indeed, the doubtful benefit of machinery, fostering the interests of economy rather than those of

art, creates dies in untold numbers, reproducing them automatically from a large master-plaque which the designer has moulded in relief. But down to the middle of the nineteenth century the designer of a coin was usually also the craftsman who gave his design reality by personally engraving, or at any rate finishing, the actual dies from which the coins should be struck. Carving dies of specially hardened metal: using instruments which, however good, were far removed from the precision instruments of the present day: working his tiny design in its actual size and taking care that it was neither so complex and “undercut” as to clog or damage the die when in use nor so low in relief as to run the risk of imperfect impression in the comparatively imperfect minting methods of the day – these were the tasks which the artists faced and overcame during the long centuries of greatness, achieving in addition the success of creating free-standing designs of great quality.

A coin which is not only pleasing to the eye but also practical as an object of exchange is thus created jointly by an artist’s sense of design and technical mastery. Countless generations have excelled in this difficult art. And although modern coinage seems often to reflect the inherited tradition only dimly, partly through the application of mechanical processes and partly through the enervating weight of convention, the skill of contemporary medallists in many countries shows that the sense of design at least is still lively and experimental and that our own time is capable of producing work of equally matched freshness and beauty.

Take a moment to absorb, perhaps re-read it. Sutherland has created a feast for the reader and numismatist. A delectable seven-course banquet which is satisfying and memorable.

This introduction made me smile audibly. When I read “frozen hand of convention” in the second paragraph I realized how eternal the words are. Written in the 1950s yet seemingly speaking directly to the plight of artistic design in U.S. coinage over the past half-century plus.

The fluidity and diplomacy of the language entranced me. Could this be Proper English?! I don’t know what Proper English looks like; I can’t recall when I’ve ever read it. I haven’t written it, and I have most certainly never spoken it. But if I speculate what it looks and sounds like, this would be it. Proper English is somewhat of a foreign language to me, my Midwestern upbringing and education having only challenged

me with bland textbooks and the syntax of slang. The local university does not offer a “Proper English as a Second Language” course for the regular English-speaking masses. I was rarely exposed to such beauty in the written word, particularly as it pertains to numismatics.

So intrigued was I that I penciled in the margin, “great intro.—translate”. Perhaps this was the seed planted for the present article those many years ago. But surely any attempt to translate such a masterful piece of writing is simply fool’s work. Therefore, I attempted it. Do I understand the language of “Oxford scholar-speak”? Am I capable of re-writing it in my own muddled English? If you will endure me, the following is my translation in “Jeff-speak”:

Art in Coinage, Chapter I, Introduction, by C. H. V. Sutherland
(Regular English translation attempt by J. M. Reichenberger)

As an art form, coins are cool. They are beautiful and have been a consistent and durable art form for nearly 3000 years. The technical achievement of coin production over those years is amazing. The goal of art in coinage is to express the consciousness of the times and it has, for the most part, fulfilled the goal.

Sometimes in history, art in coinage is not very well conceived or inventive. However, generally speaking, it has been quite good since its inception and the fact that coins exist in abundance from most periods of history is fortunate for those who would choose to study them.

Coin art can be overlooked in the art world, often based on size of the medium, whereas painting and sculpture, to offer two examples, may get better recognition. It is not the scale of a piece of art that is important, it is the execution.

In addition to scale, the technical difficulty of coin production must be appreciated. Before the invention of power machinery, dies were usually engraved by the coin designers themselves, carving their images in the dies at the actual size and doing so to accommodate aesthetics as well as the needs of commerce.

Although modern coinage art seems a mere shadow of its former self, somewhere in the world today there are skilled contemporary designers capable of creating beautiful, inventive coins.

Well, there it is. If C. H. V. Sutherland created a delicious numismatic meal, then by contrast what I have created is a bowl of potato chips.

Perhaps, at least for me, I was able to get the main points across to a certain level of understanding. It may be concise, but it's just not as lovely or enthusiastic or verbally aesthetic as the original. In Sutherland's hand, language is more fun to read and examine and contemplate. Both may be understandable, both may be reliable, but one is sustenance, the other fast food.

In the May 2014 issue of *The Numismatist*, editor Barbara Gregory discussed the virtues of well-written articles. Perhaps Proper English is not needed or expected in our times, but as she explains, "No matter how intriguing the topic, if you cannot understand the author's meaning or intent, the article is useless and your time is wasted. Reading should be a pleasurable activity, not a futile exercise. Even if a subject is outside your area of interest, a well-crafted article will draw you in."

Her words resonate with truth. This small 220-page volume, *Art in Coinage*, written sixty years ago, tackles a difficult, timeless topic with the grace and beauty of language that is all but obsolete, yet it draws you in.

This article is therefore offered as a celebration of well-written words, a celebration of the English language, a celebration of the art of numismatics, and a celebration of an extraordinary numismatic scholar.

SOURCES:

1. *Art in Coinage: The Aesthetics of Money from Greece to the Present Day*, by C.H.V. Sutherland, published 1956, by Philosophical Library, Inc., New York, N.Y. Verbatim copy used with permission, Regeen Kiernan Najar, Publisher, Philosophical Library, Inc. Any mistake in reproduction of the Introduction is the responsibility of the author of this article.
2. I am grateful to the Ashmolean Museum of Art and Archeology for providing the image of Sutherland. Specifically, Ms. Roslyn Britton-Strong who was my first contact, Professor Mayhew, President of the Royal Numismatic Society, who explained the origins of the photograph, and David Gowers of the Ashmolean, who provided an encoded link from the Oxford University archives so that I would have access to the apparently rare photo of Mr. Sutherland.
3. *Oxford Dictionary of National Biography*, 943w from "Biography of C.H.V. Sutherland" by Mayhew. Used with permission, ODNB permissions manager Ben Kennedy.

4. The image of the Sutherland medal was provided by Stack's Bowers, with the help of Samantha Douglas, Office Manager.
5. The image of the frontispiece was taken by the author.

Help Promote the Numismatic Bibliomania Society

Howard A. Daniel III sets up a club table to represent the Numismatic Bibliomania Society (and the International Bank Note Society, Numismatics International, Numismatic Literary Guild, and several other organizations) at the MPC Fest, the International Paper Money Show, and the summer FUN Show. Howard will no longer set up at American Numismatic Association events and the January FUN Show.

The Asylum and NBS membership applications are given to numismatists interested in our society from the table. Journals and applications from other societies are also given out.

There are also world bank notes and coins to give to young and new numismatists in a packet which includes a consolidated membership application form for all of the groups. References are also given out, especially to teachers and scout counselors for them to use with their students and scouts.

Howard always needs volunteers to staff the table and needs your unwanted references, journals, world banknotes, and/or world coins. Please contact him at hadaniel3@msn.com to make donation arrangements. The best method is to take them to him at one of the shows or events he attends, otherwise you can mail them to him. Howard will reply with a thank-you letter which will describe the donation for tax purposes.

Jim Halperin's Floor Copies of Two Steve Ivy Sales

Jeff Dickerson.

I recently purchased a set of several Steve Ivy Numismatic Auctions coin catalogs (the regular soft-cover versions), covering the full period of his firm's operation. After examining the lots, I found that two of the early catalogs were very special, and were not actually enumerated in the list of purchased lots. Each is the working (floor) copy of Jim Halperin, noted young numismatic dealer at the time of the sales (1976 and 1977) and later partner with Ivy. In 1983, their partnership became the Heritage Auctions still in operation today.

The catalogs in question are the December 1976 Great Southwest sale and the April 1977 Trinity sale. The Great Southwest catalog contains Halperin's mail-bid sheet (which was obviously not mailed but used on the floor), and the Trinity catalog contains his floor-bid card (#610, with "J Halperin NERCG" added) with his bids written in. The lots that are circled in the catalog match the lots indicated on the bid sheets. This confirms (beyond reasonable doubt, anyway) that the catalogs were used by Halperin.

GREAT SOUTHWEST CATALOG DETAILS

Page 2 of the catalog has the following listing of bidders written in:

B.P. 502
RLH 526
FCI 569
Forman 532
Milas 523
Gwen 541
Lipton 518

Also appearing on lot 380 (Page 14) is this notation:

#574 Kam

Most lots in the catalog have some low/high annotation (for example, lot 1 shows 70/160). Many lots show a “denominator” of BK. Several lots (perhaps half) also show the bidder number of the bidder who presumably won the lot.

To the left of most lots is an additional annotation containing two to four letters each. The unique letters, in order of their being encountered in the catalog, are the following: U, I, N, C, S, O, E, Y, B, and R. I can only guess at the meaning, but I surmise that these letters represent the pricing code used by many dealers to record their cost on the coin holder itself without revealing that information to the potential buyer. It is unclear why such a coding would be done in a personal copy of a catalog, but readers with more experience in the coin business may have some knowledge on this point. Figure 1 shows an example of these annotations.

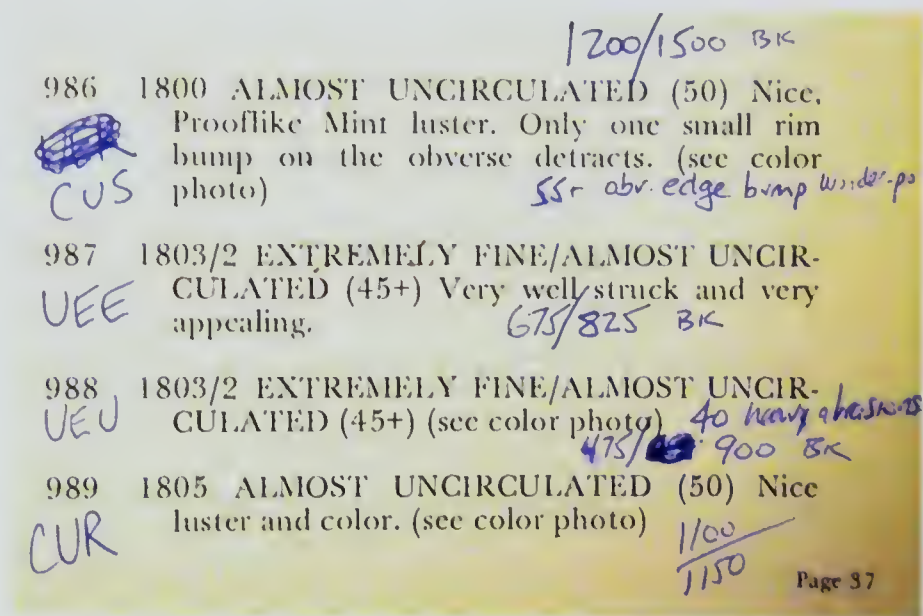


Figure 1

In addition to the numbers and pricing information, there are some notes on many lots. These notes show Halperin’s personal grades for the lots (if they differed from the catalog grade), his estimation of the quality of the lot, as well as other notes. For example, lot 1112 (a U.S. Pattern 1851 cent, J-127) has the annotation “FAKE?”.

Page 49 of the catalog (Figure 2) also has an interesting note that has been scratched through. The text of the note is “When are you going to come work for me” and “No lie detector tests”.

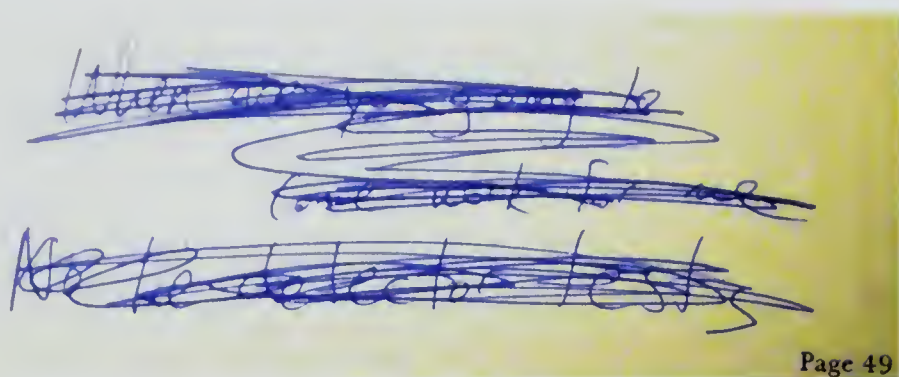


Figure 2

TRINITY CATALOG DETAILS

Page 2 of this catalog has the following listing of bidders written in:

626 Kevin
 644 R L Hughes
 619 Bob Kelly
 624 MTB
 628 Sconyers
 629 Hancock
 643 Copeland
 613 Grayson
 627 Dr. Karl Steckler
 623 Brownlee
 609 Paramount
 655, 642 Rowe
 604 Gwen Houston

The lots of this catalog are priced normally instead of with the code used in the Southwest catalog (Figure 3). The catalog has the same low/high annotation, and bidder numbers are occasionally indicated. Bid card 641 with the initials AHL is also tipped in to the catalog, but no bids are present on the card. Page 41 (U.S. Patterns) also has some additional red text, indicating either a later update by Mr. Halperin or annotation by a later owner of the catalog.

It is fortunate that these two catalogs were saved for so long and not thrown out like so many are. They are a source of valuable information for future researchers. If there is any interest, I would be happy to create a more detailed listing of each lot for future reference, as time permits.

303 1877-CC CHOICE BRILLIANT UNCIRCULATED (60+) Sharp and brilliant. (see color photo) 175 195/260 #606

304 1878-CC CHOICE BRILLIANT UNCIRCULATED (60+) Prooflike, which accentuates a myriad of die scratches on the reverse. (see color photo) 375 315/385 #626

Figure 3

Off the Shelf: A Modern Hardcover Rarity

David F. Fanning

In 1990, I visited Walter Breen at his home in Berkeley, California, and spent some time going through his numismatic library. I was deeply interested in American numismatic auction catalogues, especially the early ones, and made many notes based on his copy of the Adams reference¹ and other sources. Breen gave me access to his papers, too, many of which were unpublished and all of which I wish I remembered more clearly than I do. Perhaps there was something in the air.

Breen had worked for Lester Merkin in the 1960s and 1970s, and had catalogued a number of Merkin's auction sales. I always had a soft spot for these catalogues, despite their somewhat terse descriptions, and took advantage of Breen's copies to make of listing of them (Figure 1). I didn't have a copy of Gengerke at the time, and did a lot of this sort of thing.²

In going through Breen's library, I noticed that he had a copy of Merkin's eighth sale (March 6–7, 1968) bound in black cloth. This was an above-average sale for Merkin, featuring material from the Louis Helfenstein and J. Hewitt Judd collections. The 72-page catalogue boasted a *Collection of United States Colonials, Cents, Half Dimes, Dimes, Quarters, Dollars, Gold, Virginia Colonial, Fractional, Large and Small Size Currency, Featuring Half Cents, Half Dollars, Early Proof Sets* according to the cover (Figure 2). Breen had been the primary cataloguer.

I was aware of a hardcover version of Merkin's first public sale, that of the Helfenstein large cents (August 14, 1964), though Breen only had a softcover version that I saw. The hardcover eighth sale was the only bound catalogue among Breen's Merkin sales, so I took a closer look at

¹ John W. Adams, *United States Numismatic Literature, Volume I: Nineteenth Century Auction Catalogs* (Mission Viejo: Kolbe, 1982).

² I like to joke that I have CDO: it's like OCD, but in alphabetical order.

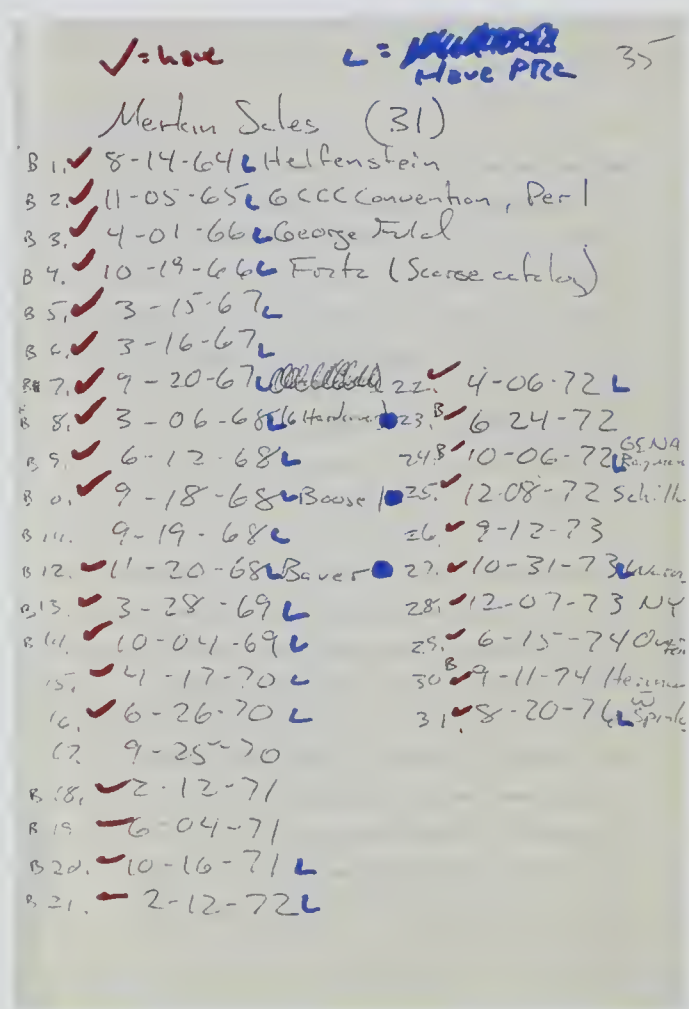


Figure 1. Page from my journal recording the Merkin sales present in Walter Breen's library. Note that the eighth sale has "6 hardcover" in parentheses following it.

it. My notebook records that only six copies of this sale were bound, information gleaned from a note in Breen's hand in this copy.³

As I examined this slim black hardcover, I noticed something puzzling (Figure 3). The volume was lettered in gilt and stated that this was Merkin's *seventh* sale, not his eighth. A quick look at my listing and at the catalogues themselves verified that, no, this was his eighth sale. The bound catalogue's cover specified that this was Merkin's seventh *public* sale—so perhaps one of the first seven was a mail-bid sale, explaining the irregularity in numbering? Nope, they were all public sales: the cover

³ Though in the years since I had managed to forget the source of this information, only being reminded of Breen's note by Dan Hamelberg, the current owner of this copy.

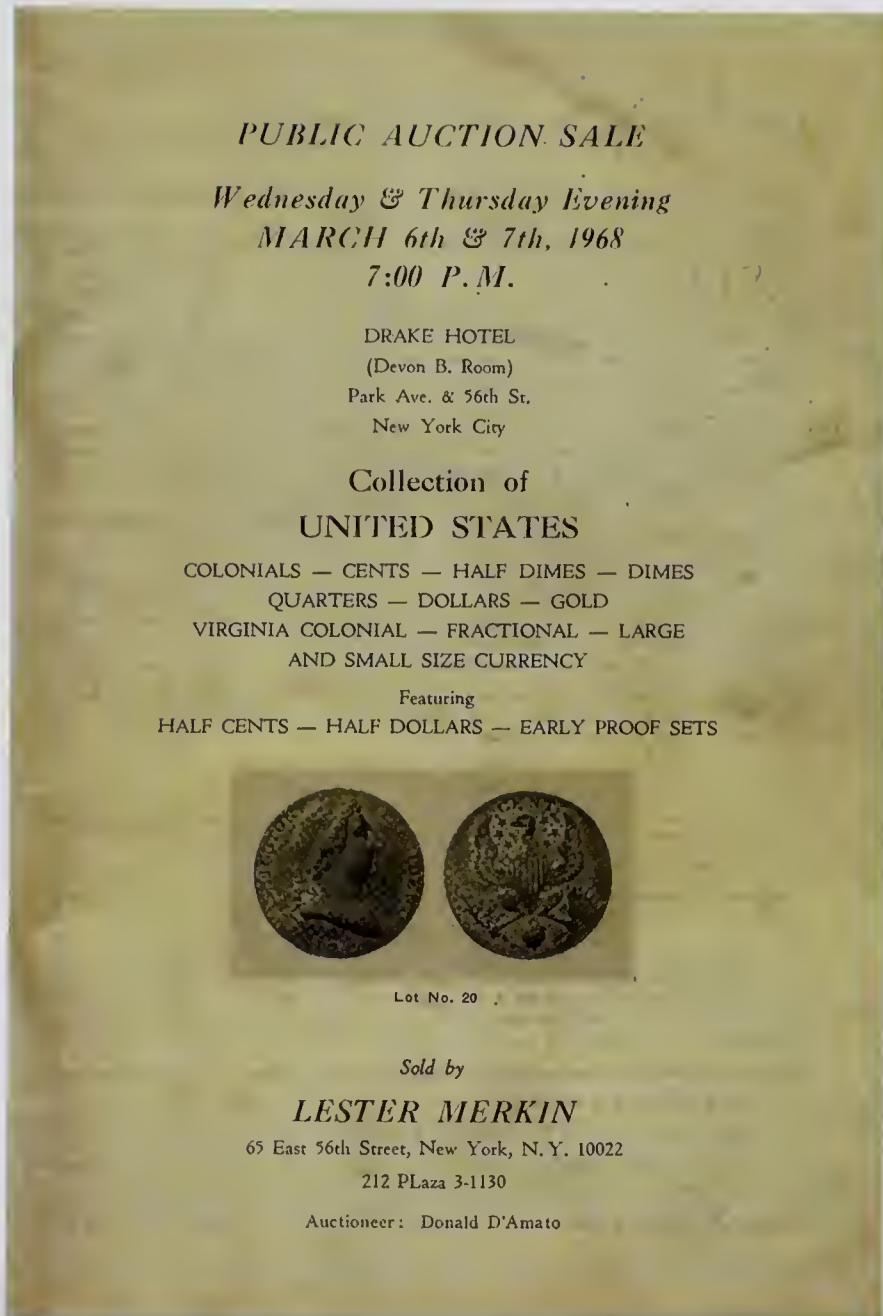


Figure 2. Lester Merkin's March 6-7, 1968, auction catalogue (softcover version).

lettering was simply erroneous. Odd, but I put the puzzle aside and soon forgot about it.

Flash forward twenty-some years. I was reacquainted with this minor mystery upon adding a copy of the hardcover eighth sale to my own library. I began going through old catalogues trying to find additional information about it. A reasonable starting place seemed to be in

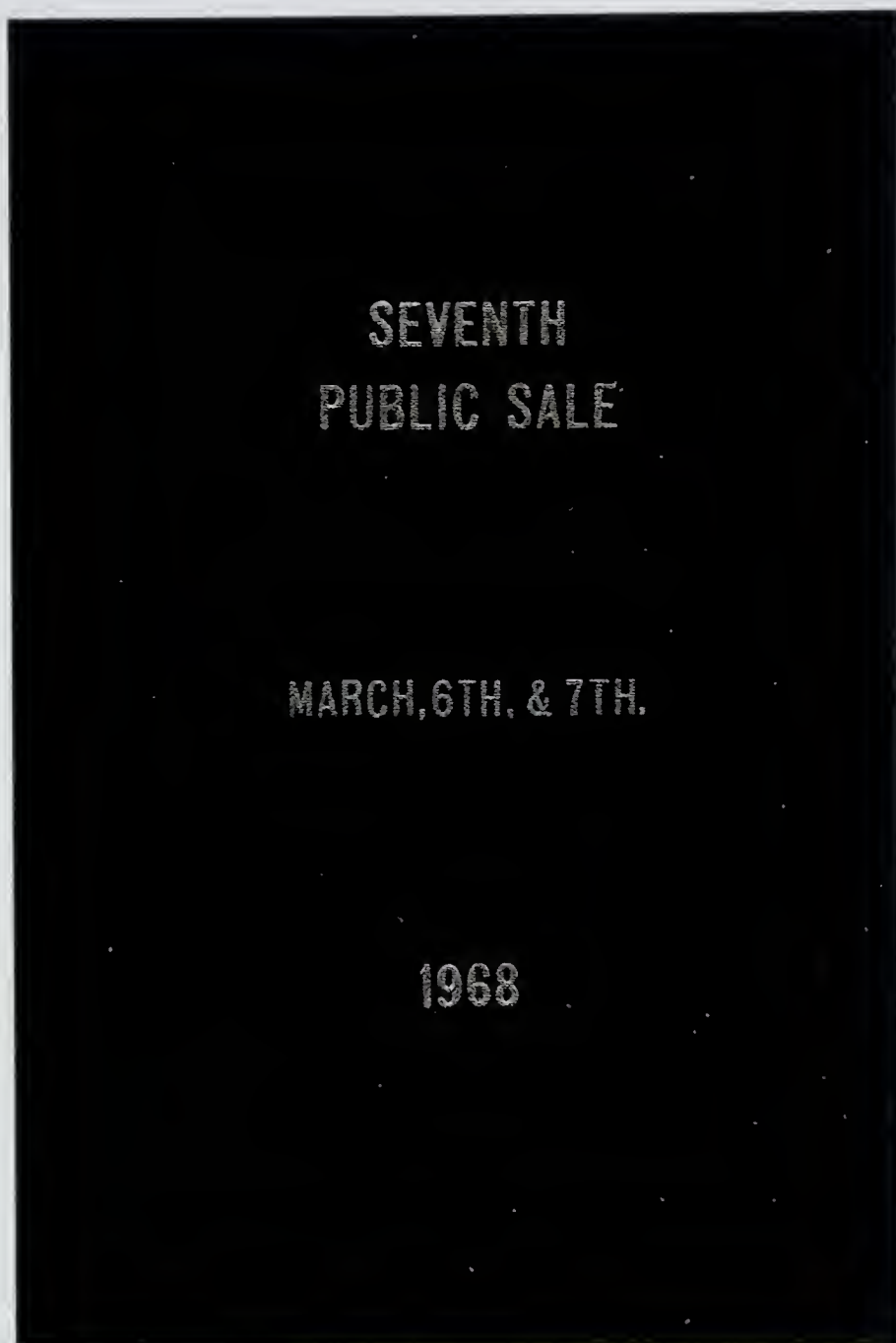


Figure 3. The hardcover version of Merkin's eighth sale.

George Kolbe's catalogue of Merkin's own library, held in June 1984. The sale included a copy of this hardcover oddity, where it appears as lot 300. The description, which must have been based on what Merkin had recalled, stated that it was "one of three copies specially bound by Sol Kaplan. This copy was presented to Lester Merkin with his name stamped in gilt on the front cover. Sol Kaplan retained a copy and the

third copy was presented by Merkin to the purchaser of the early proof sets, sold en bloc at the sale.”

So there may only be three copies? Interesting. Presumably Merkin would have known better than Breen, though apparently neither was involved in its production. Merkin’s copy was purchased at the sale by Tony Terranova for \$160 hammer on an estimate of \$25 to \$50.

At this point, I wanted to focus on determining how many copies were produced. A good starting point, I thought, would be to ask Dan Hamelberg, a man who is known to own a book or two.

Or three, as it turns out. Dan wrote back to me quickly saying that he owned three copies of this hardcover Merkin sale. Owning one myself, this discounted the notion that only three copies were thus bound. Dan was able to provide me with provenance information for his copies, and combining this information with my own researches I was able to compile the following census.

1. Lester Merkin’s own copy, purchased at the sale of his library by Tony Terranova. Has Merkin’s name impressed in gilt on the front cover.
2. Richard Picker’s copy, offered in Kolbe’s Sale 38 (December 1988) and purchased by Dan Hamelberg for \$70 hammer on a \$50 estimate. I do not believe that it is identifiable except through Kolbe’s attribution of it to Picker. Previously offered in Kolbe Sale 21, lot 736.
3. Abe Kosoff’s copy, offered in Kolbe’s 59th sale (July 1994) sale and purchased by Dan Hamelberg for \$70 hammer on a \$50 estimate. The catalogue has Kosoff’s AK monogram on the front flyleaf to identify it. Offered previously in Kolbe’s 20th sale.
4. Walter Breen’s copy, offered in a Money Tree sale of June 1995 and purchased by Dan Hamelberg. This is the copy with the note in Breen’s hand claiming that six copies were produced.
5. Sol Kaplan’s copy, offered in David Sklow’s 9th sale (February 2010) and sold for \$82 hammer on a \$50 estimate. The catalogue has Kaplan’s name impressed on the front cover in gilt, a trait it shares only with the Merkin copy. Offered previously in Money Tree’s 32nd sale (the Ken Lowe library, December 1999) sale, where it was bought by Myron Xenos.
6. A copy offered in Charles Davis’s December 2012 sale and purchased by me for \$175 hammer on a \$50 estimate. Merkin’s recollection that

a copy was given to the buyer of the early proof sets could identify this copy. George Kolbe offered a copy in his 21st sale (lot 735), stating it was from Kosoff's library but unmarked. Kolbe had offered the marked Kosoff copy in his previous sale, and Picker's as a different lot in Sale 21, so this is almost certainly copy 6.

Charles Davis has noted that a possible explanation for this hardcover catalogue is the fact that Louis Helfenstein was one of the consignors and Merkin had produced a hardcover version of the more well-known 1964 Helfenstein sale.⁴ If it is true that Kaplan produced them, though, what would have been his motivation in so doing? It is also notable that to the best of my knowledge, neither Helfenstein nor Judd received copies.

Regardless of the reason for its production, it is clear that the hardcover sale is a modern rarity among U.S. numismatic auction catalogues, one that has remained a sleeper for many years.

⁴ Charles Davis, Auction Sale (Dec. 1, 2012), lot 533.

The 2014 NBS Symposium

Joel J. Orosz

The 2014 NBS Symposium on August 7, 2014, was notable for the quality of its two speakers, the first appearance of a major new book, and a special auction for the benefit of the NBS that drew generous bids for the good of the club. The speakers' topic, "What it Takes to Get Your Numismatic Book or Article in Print: How to Research, Write and Have It Published," was one guaranteed to interest an audience full of inveterate authors.

First at the microphone was NBS member Q. David Bowers (NBS Charter Member 27), the dean of the numismatic hobby's authors. 2014 marks the fiftieth anniversary of the publication of Dave's first numismatic book, *Coins and Collectors*, and Symposium attendees got the first glimpse of Dave's latest offering, entitled, logically enough, *Coins and Collectors: Golden Anniversary Edition*. Whitman Publishing had but a single display copy at the convention, for the book will not be available until autumn 2014, but publisher Dennis Tucker arranged to bring this copy to the Symposium to provide NBS members a first chance to examine this delightful compendium of numismatic storytelling. Noting that both the author and the writer of the foreword (Joel J. Orosz) were on hand, Dave suggested that both inscribe the book, then offer it to the membership for an impromptu auction to help meet the NBS's operating costs.

The auction featured spirited bidding that carried the price well over \$1,000. NBS Past President Dan Hamelberg snared the book at a hammer bid of \$1,400, and he generously added a hundred dollars to make a total \$1,500 donation to the NBS. He could not carry off his prize, however, for Whitman needed the copy for display until the end of the convention, making Dan the first charity auction winner in the history of the NBS to walk away (temporarily) empty-handed!

Dave Bowers offered his trademarked blend of historical anecdotes and current hobby insights. He noted that Whitman Publishing can

trace its roots as far back as 1934, to the products of J.K. Post of Neenah, Wisconsin, and during thirty years following the company did much to promote the growth of numismatics through the creation of coin boards and folders, as well as the publication of several standard works of reference, most notably the iconic Blue and Red Books. Dave himself participated in the tandem growth of Whitman and the hobby, fondly recalling “special” Red Books produced at his instigation, one of which contained (proscribed) advertising for his first major coin firm, Empire Coin Company, and another one-off that was bound in fur!

Dave also recalled darker times, after Whitman had been sold to St. Martin’s Press, when it was only one of the conglomerate’s numerous publishing subsidiaries, and far from the most important. He once called a St. Martin’s executive who could not answer a question until he found, after much rifling through his desk, the “Whitman” folder! Brighter days followed the purchase of Whitman Publishing by the Anderson Brothers, who hired Dave to be Whitman’s Numismatic Director on the basis of a handshake. Remarkably, there have been only two editors of the Red Book in its 67-year history; Dave discussed the cordial relationship he has with the second “Mr. Red Book,” Ken Bressett. As Dave put it, he never argues with Ken, although he occasionally loses an argument over whether a coin should be included in the *Guide Book*.

Dave concluded with a few facts about the first of his books, the original *Coins and Collectors*, published in 1964. Such was the popularity of coin collecting in the mid-1960s that the 10,000 copies of the first edition printed by Windsor Research Publications rapidly sold out, and Crown Publishing, which handled the second edition, printed 100,000 more to meet the demand. Current-day numismatic authors can only note these numbers with jealous wonder, for today sales of 5,000 copies are occasion for cork-popping celebrations.

Dennis Tucker then took the platform to discuss the specifics of how to get your numismatic book published. He suggested starting by “building a personal platform,” that is, establishing a track record in publishing, ideally by writing a book, but if not, by publishing several articles. Once the platform is in place, the next step is to ask yourself, “What do I have that is publishable?” Is it scholarly? If so, it should feature original, in-depth research. Is it popular? If so, it should provide a different take on a familiar subject. Is it a “how-to” piece? If so, make sure it is based not only on your personal experience, but also on the experience

of others. Then comes the question of style—will you follow the AP style guide or the Chicago style guide? The Whitman Publishing Style Guide is available from Dennis as a PDF.

Dennis suggested the following format for a book proposal:

- Cover letter with name of author(s) and contact information (address, phone, e-mail)
- Working title of the book (understanding that it might be changed)
- Names of contributors (consultants, research assistants)
- Intended audience(s) of book (be specific)
- Analysis of current competition (similar books on the market or being written)
- Proposed format (size, page count, binding, illustrations)
- Brief biographies of the author(s) and contributor(s)
- A detailed table of contents and at least 2 sample chapters

Each proposal should address the following:

- Has your book been published before? If so, please give details: date, publisher, format, print run, quantity sold, copyright owner.
- How will your book be superior to its competitors in the same field? Analyze the strengths and weaknesses of competing texts; how will your book be different/better? If no competing book exists, why not?
- How many copies do you expect would sell during the first 12 months?
- Production timeline (How long do you need to write text, gather images, compile data?)
- Has your manuscript been peer reviewed? If not, please recommend expert readers who could critically review it.

If Whitman accepts a book for publication, the author will be working with the following:

- Publisher (coordinates the work of all who follow)
- Acquisitions editor (seeks and secures new manuscripts for publication)
- Copy editor (works with authors on the text of the manuscript)
- Production editor (works with authors on logistics of the manuscript)
- Art director (works with authors on illustrations in the manuscript)
- Designer (works with authors on layout of the manuscript)
- Typesetter (works on the text of the manuscript)
- Numismatic Director (Q. David Bowers)

- Pricing analyst (determines the optimum price point for the finished book)

On some projects, different people will wear multiple hats. All are necessary, however, in order to create the high standard of quality that people have come to expect of Whitman Publishing.

Dennis closed by fielding questions, which revealed, among other things, that certain factors, such as pricing information and color photos, are always a stimulus to sales. Whitman prints books mainly in China, but also utilizes printers in Mexico, Canada, and the United States. Sales of the Red Book have been holding steady over the years since the Andersons purchased Whitman Publishing.



Dennis Tucker, Joel Orosz, Dan Hamelberg, and Q. David Bowers with the autographed advance copy of *Coins and Collectors: Golden Anniversary Edition* at the NBS Symposium on August 7, 2014.

The 2014 NBS Annual Meeting

Joel J. Orosz

President Marc Ricard called the 35th Annual Meeting of the Numismatic Bibliomania Society to order at the ANA annual convention in Rosemont, Illinois, on Friday August 8, 2014, commencing at 11:30 am CST. In attendance were approximately thirty-five enthusiastic bibliophiles, a small miracle given the fact that not even Kit Carson, the legendary “Pathfinder”, could have easily discovered the well-hidden room 42 on the second floor of the Donald Stephens Conference Center, where the meeting was held.

With a full agenda to complete, President Ricard ran the meeting briskly. The annual awards, as voted by the membership, were bestowed as follows:

- Jack Collins Award, for best article by a first-time author in *The Asylum*: Arnold Tescher, for “Hidden Voices in the ANS Archives: Emmanuel J. Attinelli Heard Again,” in Vol. 31, No. 4, Oct.–Dec., 2013.
- Joel J. Orosz Award, for best article published in *The Asylum*: George F. Kolbe, “The Reminiscences of a Numismatic Bookseller,” published serially in Vol. 31, Nos. 1, 2, 4, Jan.–Mar., Apr.–Jun., and Oct.–Dec. 2013.
- The George F. Kolbe Award for Lifetime Achievement in Numismatic Literature was not awarded this year.

In addition, the Numismatic Literary Guild bestowed its award for “Best Article, Small Publications” upon Past President John W. Adams for “*Numisgraphics: The Flesh and the Spirit*” in *The Asylum*, Vol. 31, No. 2, Apr.–Jun. 2013.

Secretary-Treasurer David Sundman reported on the status of the NBS’s membership and finances. Membership, at 344, has slightly increased from 340 last year. The balance in the treasury, at \$13,886.15, is down from \$19,127.00 last year. This drop is largely attributable to the increased expenses occasioned by switching the printing of *The Asylum*

from black and white to full color. The NBS Board considered a number of possible means to reduce costs and to boost revenues so that outlays will come into balance with income. Decisions were made to retain the color printing and to continue publishing *The Asylum* four times per year. Charitable contributions to benefit the libraries of the ANS and the ANA will be suspended in order to reduce costs, and efforts will be made to increase the income derived from the annual NBS benefit auction at the annual meeting. This latter goal was partially met by the special auction held the day before at the NBS symposium, at which the first copy of Q. David Bowers' new book, *Coins and Collectors: Golden Anniversary Edition*, with a foreword by NBS member Joel J. Orosz, was sold to Past President Dan Hamelberg for \$1,500.00.

President Ricard announced that, at the upcoming biennial NBS elections, he would stand for a second two-year presidential term, and Vice President Elizabeth Hahn Bengé would also stand for a second term. After nearly a decade of exemplary service, however, David Sundman will be stepping down as Secretary-Treasurer, so President Ricard welcomed candidates to throw their hats into the ring for that important position.

Past President Dan Hamelberg provided both a superb exhibit and an informative talk on the Congressional Act of April 2, 1792, that created the United States Mint. The exhibit contained the following foundational documents:

- Thomas Jefferson's 1790 report on weights, measures, and coins, in which he recommended the use of a decimal system of coinage
- The Congressional Act creating the Mint, signed by Jefferson as Secretary of State (one of only three such copies in existence)
- The official Congressional printing of the Mint Act
- The cover page of the appointment of Henry Voigt as the first Chief Coiner of the Mint, also signed by Jefferson as Secretary of State
- The first edition in English of Jefferson's *Notes on the State of Virginia*, which has minimal numismatic content but distinct association with Jefferson, since it was the only book he ever wrote.

Dan spoke of the research he had conducted to locate and to learn more about this formidable array of historical documents. He traced Jefferson's efforts, beginning in 1775, to establish a rational and convenient system of coinage for the young United States. And he briefly reviewed all twenty sections of the Mint Act of April 2, 1792, reminding us of

both the well-known (section 9, which fixed the denominations of coinage) and the less well-remembered (section 19, which provided the death penalty for debasement of coinage).

Never has such a stunning array of historically important documents and publications been presented at an NBS meeting. Hats off to Dan for bringing these treasures from his incomparable numismatic library for our delight and edification. Both exhibit and talk brought us new appreciation for central role that Thomas Jefferson played in the creation of our decimal system of coinage, which is almost universally accepted today, but which was a revolutionary departure 225 years ago.

The second speaker was Past President Wayne Homren, widely known throughout the hobby as the founder, publisher, editor, and indispensable man of *The E-Sylum*, the electronic newsletter of the Numismatic Bibliomania Society. Wayne's topic was "The Past, Present and Future of Online Numismatics." He began with the past, with ARPANET, which by 1980 was a national system of connected main-frame computers. This Internet 1.0 was not yet international, but it did contain newsgroups, including [rec.collecting.coins](#) and [rec.collecting.paper-money](#).

In 1980, Joe Lepczyk and Larry Brilliant of Michigan formed C.O.I.N.S., a bulletin board-style communications platform for collectors to chat/buy/sell/trade. Wayne reached out to the founders and became a consultant to the company. It was a great technology at the time, but numismatists weren't ready for it, and it went defunct. By the 1990s, Numismatists Online, the first full-featured numismatic auction site, was up and running. In the late 1990s, Ted, Brad, and Blaine Shiff of Pittsburgh established [CyberCoins.net](#), a business which is still thriving today.

The 1990s also witnessed the advent of the Netscape browser, America Online, and eBay. The NBS was an early entrant in the world of electronic numismatics. Our first website was built by Wayne ca. 1990, created by hand-editing HTML code. Wayne attempted to secure NBS.org for our URL but discovered it was already taken by the National Black Skiers' Association, so he chose [Coinbooks.org](#).

The evolution of *The E-Sylum* took a little longer. Wayne envisioned it in the early 1990s but held back because so few NBS members had online connections. When he asked at the 1996 NBS annual meeting how many were online, only three hands were raised: Mike Hodder,

Past President P. Scott Rubin, and Joel J. Orosz. A similar question at the 1997 annual meeting elicited the raising of a few more hands. The turning point came at the 1998 annual meeting in Portland, Oregon, when a critical mass of hands went aloft. Wayne sent out a call for subscribers (first to answer, Peter Gaspar of St. Louis). The first issue of *The E-Sylum* was sent on September 4, 1998. Today there are more than 1,750 subscribers, 17,748 archived articles, and 10,146 images, with all three categories growing weekly.

Wayne then discussed the present and future through his new venture, CoinLibrary.com. He started with the understanding that much numismatic information is not yet on the Internet—and a significant portion of it is not likely to be anytime soon. There are at least a dozen major places to look for information, and no one has the time or the patience to search each thoroughly. CoinLibrary.com, Wayne's venture in development, will be the online resource for quality information about coins of all countries and all time periods. It will present curated content: books, periodicals, auction catalogues, web sites, both public and private content. It is not just a web search engine (although searches will be 100% numismatic), but also a place for numismatic organizations to publish proprietary information previously available only to their members.

CoinLibrary.com is very much a work in progress, but already it has absorbed content as varied as the Numismatic Index Project, *The E-Sylum*, selected portions of *The Asylum*, the Goldbergs' catalogues, and certain books. Content is being added from Heritage Auctions, Stack's Bowers Galleries, the ANS, the NBS, and the Liberty Seated Collectors Club. This work has been supported by generous donors, including Harvey Stack, John W. Adams, Dan Hamelberg, John Kraljevich, David Sundman, Q. David Bowers, and Anthony Terranova. Volunteers have been helpful in moving the project forward, including Len Augsburger, Roger Burdette, David Perkins, Joel J. Orosz, Eric Schena, John Nebel, Mike Paradis, John Sallay, and Dennis Tucker.

The ultimate aim of CoinLibrary.com is to preserve and make accessible all useful numismatic information. It will make it possible to search for any numismatic information and get a curated, weighted, and accurate response that will tell the searcher what is known and what still needs to be learned about the subject. Wayne envisions a friction-free future for numismatic researchers, who will be able to instantly find what they need to move the hobby forward.

The meeting concluded with the annual NBS benefit auction. Twenty lots of books were donated by Past President Dan Hamelberg, and Secretary-Treasurer David Sundman provided two more. Once again, the role of auctioneer was capably handled by Past President Dan Freidus, and spirited bidders knocked down the lots for a grand total of \$3,405. When combined with Dan Hamelberg's \$1,500 purchase of the first copy of *Coins and Collectors: Fiftieth Anniversary Edition*, this donation will go a long way toward stabilizing the NBS's finances. All in all, it was a fine week in Rosemont, and the future of the NBS, thanks to historians like Dan Hamelberg, visionaries like Wayne Homren, and talented writers, open-handed donors, and amped-up bidders throughout the membership, has never looked brighter.

New Advertising Rates for 2015

After several years in which advertising rates for *The Asylum* have remained stable, inflation and increased printing costs have had their inevitable effect. The NBS Board has decided to increase the advertising rates for *The Asylum*, effective January 2015. The full schedule of rates will be as follows:

	Old rate	New rate
Covers (6 × 9 inches)	\$100	\$125
Cover for full year	\$300	\$400
Full page (6 × 9 inches)	\$90	\$120
Full page for full year	\$300	\$360
Half page (6 × 4½ inches)	\$50	\$75

As before, questions regarding placement and scheduling of ads should be directed to the Managing Editor of *The Asylum*, David Yoon (nbsasylum@gmail.com). Inquiries regarding billing and payment may be directed to the NBS Treasurer, David Sundman (dsundman@little-toncoin.com).

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The Asylum (ISSN 1552-1931) is published in four issues per year. Manuscripts should be sent to the editor by e-mail or on CD. Authors, please put your name(s) on all submitted material.

All accepted manuscripts become the property of the Numismatic Bibliomania Society. For more information, please contact the editor.

NBS Membership: in the United States, \$20.00 annual dues for standard mail, \$25.00 for first-class mail; outside the United States, \$30.00. New members receive one back issue plus all new issues upon publication. Requests for membership and change of address should be submitted to the Treasurer.



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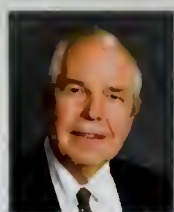
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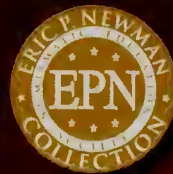


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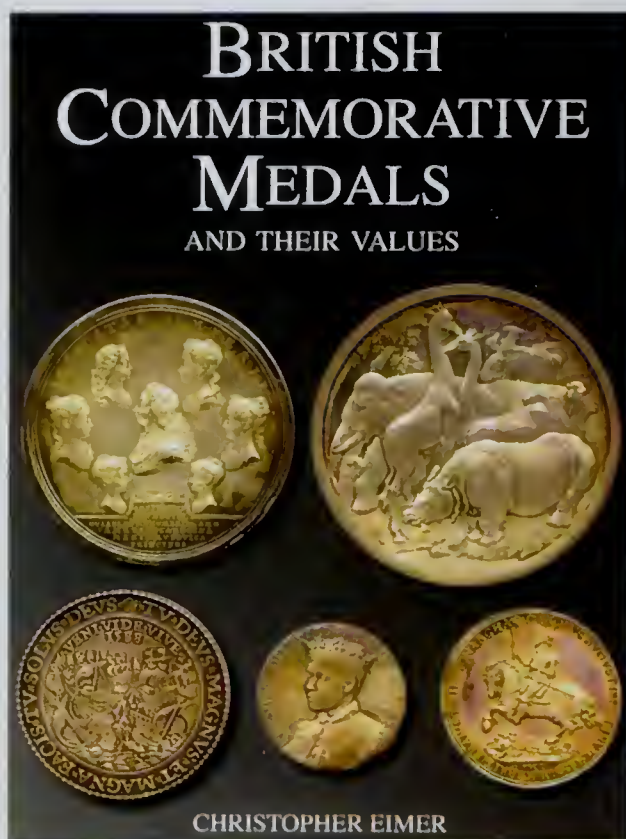
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